

Record

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SPECIAL
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM
EDITION INSIDE

Baptist disaster relief units activated

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Tornadoes and violent storms ripped through Mississippi on April 6, hitting 21 counties, damaging or destroying at least 253 homes, and leaving more than 5,500 people without power. Chainsaw teams from the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force were at several sites within hours.

Lifeline Church in the Monterey Road area southwest of Brandon was devastated, losing one wall and the roof. Six people were injured in this area, where most of the damage occurred. Mobile homes were destroyed. Splintered pine trees, insulation, and other debris littered the roadways and hung from the remaining trees. The National Weather Service determined that the tornado that hit the Monterey Road area ranked as an F-3 on the Fujita scale, meaning the winds ranged from 158 mph to 206 mph.

First Church, Jackson; First Church, Madison; and Rankin Association all deployed volunteers, staging from Briar Hill Church, Florence, which also served as a Red Cross shelter for the tornado's victims.

The team from First Church, Madison, experienced their first call, helping remove debris and cutting trees at a private home.

"We started about a year ago," said Rebecca Jacks, a member of First, Madison, who was working from the church's disaster response trailer. "We got counsel from the Men's Ministry Department (of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board), learning what we needed to have on our trailer. So we got this trailer, got equipment, and this is our first activation."

"We can respond to most anything," Jacks said. "We have chainsaws, we have generators... we've been trained in chainsaw and mudout work. We're in the process of developing a shelter ministry, and I'm the team leader for that."



SURVEYING THE DAMAGE — Jim Didlake, director of the Men's Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, surveys the ruins of Lifeline Church in the Monterey community near Brandon. The church was struck by the F3 tornado that ravaged the area on April 6. Several Mississippi Baptist disaster relief units responded. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

Chainsaw teams from Rankin Association and First Church, Jackson, worked to clear trees and debris from homes in another Rankin County neighborhood. With the astonishing randomness that comes with tornadoes, some houses were virtually untouched while others nearby sustained major damage.

Dot Harrison, long-time resident and organist at several area Baptist churches, was at home with her husband when the storm hit.

"About five minutes before the storm hit, we heard the roaring," Harrison said. "We weren't able to take shelter in the house fast enough and were here [in the living room] when the tornado hit."

Harrison's yard was filled with twisted trees and lumber; the roof was gone from their garage. A group from First Church, Jackson, was working diligently to remove as much debris as possible, cutting splintered pines to make them more manageable.

The Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Force is supported by gifts to the Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering and the Mississippi Cooperative Program.

For more information on the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, contact the MBCB Men's Ministry Department at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 292-2334 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 334. E-mail: cwright@mbcb.org.

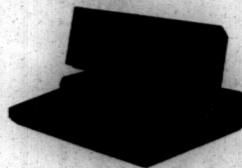
Miss. CP

Gifts to the work of the Cooperative Program (CP) over giving last month, under the direction-treasurer of the Board which disburses \$2,749,194 is 3.08% higher than the same month, and 8.69% lower than the same period in 2004. Total for current fiscal year, which stands at \$8,626,618, which is 3.08% during the same period as the year budget needs. The 2005 budget of \$31,314,491, was approved at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Convention board. The total of \$2,609,541 is needed to support the convention board's budget for CP to support more than 10,700 missions around the world through the Southern Baptist Convention, Missions programs as the State Bible Convention, Festival on April 16 at Mississippi Preaching/Worship Conference, Church, Biloxi; and the Preschool Retreat on March 5-6 at Camp Gar-

for month

(reports) — Contributions through the Cooperative Program (CP) for March were \$16,393,06 received the \$15,115,122 received in March from the SBC Executive Committee and Morris H. Chapman. Year to date is the same time frame in 2004. As of March 31, 2005, the \$98,606,116 for Cooperative Program received the \$95,454,884.61 received at the giving of \$116,557,161 for the same month, or \$1,558,294, below gifts of last year. The \$26,778,441 in designated giving is \$2,416,108 above the \$24,362,332 of 9.92%. For the SBC Cooperative Program year-to-date total of \$98,606,116 is needed, or \$7,005,269 above budget to countries globally and across North America. The fiscal year, Oct. 1, 2003 to Sept. 30, 2004, a 3.64% increase in CP giving, for a 3.64% increase in CP giving, for a Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists and ministry efforts of state and local churches and the Southern Baptist Convention. The receipts from individuals, church groups and corporations for distribution according to the location Budget.

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK



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Cooperative Program: simply the best

Mississippi Baptists recently bought light bulbs, updated computer systems, acquired the latest Vacation Bible School materials, and helped save thousands of souls across the globe — all with one recurring financial gift to the most brilliant and efficient plan ever devised for fulfilling our Lord's Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Cooperative Program, utilized by Mississippi Baptists and Southern Baptists everywhere to fund everything from theological education to campgrounds to missions to, yes, light bulbs, is still in pretty good shape 80 years after it was born. Battered and sometimes bruised over the years, the Cooperative Program still stands tall in Kingdom work.

Yet if a poll was taken among Mississippi Baptists specifically and Southern Baptists in general who give faithfully and sacrificially to their churches as to exactly what the Cooperative Program is and what it does, many of us would have to plead ignorance.

"I don't think people fully understand the Cooperative Program and everything the Cooperative Program is capable of doing," says Candace McRae, treasurer for Trinity Church, Marion. "We need to get that message to the people. The people need to know that as long as there are lost souls, we are not doing enough and we need to do better."

The Cooperative Program is Mississippi Baptists' and Southern Baptists' way of funding a large portion of their local, state, national, and international efforts. In this state, Mississippi Baptist churches receive Cooperative Program gifts from their members, and retain a percentage of those gifts for the Kingdom work of the church. The remainder is forwarded to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson. Messengers from the convention's cooperating churches that sent the money gather each year to determine what percentage of the pooled gifts from the churches will be retained for Kingdom work in Mississippi. (Many local churches also set aside an appropriation that is sent to the Baptist association in which they hold membership.)

The remainder is forwarded to the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in Nashville, which follows instructions from messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in disbursing the funds received from the state conventions for national and international Kingdom work.

In reality the system is complex and far-reaching, but the concept is simple: the many can accomplish more than the few or the one. At each step of the Cooperative Program process, God's work is increased through the generosity of cheerful givers. As many Christian denominations and organizations struggle for financial survival, we should be praising the Lord for financially looking out for us so well.

David Michel, associate executive director for mission strategy at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, is responsible for Cooperative Program promotion among Mississippi Baptists..

"Beyond the Cooperative Program's historical effectiveness, its interactive potential for linking believers, churches, denominational agencies, missionaries, and unreached people is unlimited. No single church, regional association, state convention, or denominational agency can hope to deploy a world-sized missions network alone," Michel says.

"Yet, by combining resources and energies, Southern Baptists field over 10,000 missionaries through the collaboration of 40 state conventions, 1,250 associations, and 45,000 churches. The combined strengths represented in that collaboration create a missions infrastructure through which more than 100,000 short-term volunteers serve around the world each year," he points out.

Some Cooperative Program watchers are concerned about its future, with justification. Kosciusko native Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, warned Executive Committee members in February



of what he sees as a "dangerous trend." He says that churches are forwarding less of their offerings (as a percentage) now through the Cooperative Program than they were two decades ago. In 1984, he says, the average church forwarded 10.6% of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program while in the 2003-04 fiscal year, that number fell to 6.99%.

The Cooperative Program is a Kingdom triumph. We need to reverse that downward trend as quickly as possible, but it won't be easy with the economy in the doldrums, interest rates on the rise, and gasoline at \$2.50 a gallon. We owe it to our Lord and Savior, however.

After what He did for us, it's the least we can do for Him.

GUEST OPINION:

Empowerment for singing

By L. Graham Smith, director
Church Music Department
Miss. Baptist Convention Bd.

songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." However, our empowerment for singing is shared in the preceding verse, "...be filled with the spirit." Paul is telling us not to be filled with too much wine, but rather with God's Holy Spirit.

This is where our wisdom, our leading, our very basic empowerment comes from — the Holy Spirit of God Himself. This is the spirit of unity, love, caring, understanding, and fellowship —

not of superiority, exclusiveness, narrowness, or imitation. We are told to sing "new songs," but in God's economy we are not to discard those songs of our heritage that not only exalt God but also help to bring to our remembrance His great characteristics as well as celebrate the Christian life and our fellowship as believers.

The Bible translation, The Message, reads: "Drink the Spirit of God, huge draughts of Him. Sing hymns instead of drinking songs! Sing songs

from your heart to Christ. Sing praises over everything, any excuse for a song to God the Father in the Name of our Master, Jesus Christ."

What a formula God through His Word has provided us. This not only gives us reasons to sing, but tells us from where our strength and inspiration come. This Scripture gives credence to all forms of music that honor God: hymns, choruses, praise songs, spirituals, anthems, or any other God-inspired music. With our very being fortified with these exciting reflections, let us resolve not to let differences in style separate us from one another, but rather unite and bring together our fellowship and praise to the furtherance of God's Kingdom here on earth.

This will enable us to be faithful witnesses (Acts 1:8) as we seek to fulfill the second greatest commandment: "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself," as we go about our ministry of sharing the song of Jesus.

California ruling delivers bad, good news

SAN FRANCISCO (BP and local reports)

— A California court April 4 upheld the state's domestic partnership law but also gave conservatives some good news, concluding that the legislature is prohibited from legalizing same-sex marriage without first taking the issue to the public.

The ruling initially was thought to be a solid win for homosexual activists. The California Court of Appeal ruled that the domestic partnership law does not violate Proposition 22 — the voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage — but on page 12 of the 26-page ruling, the court also included a passage that at first went unnoticed, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

"Without submitting the matter to the voters, the Legislature cannot change this absolute refusal to recognize marriages between persons of the same sex," the three-judge panel, seated in Sacramento, wrote. The court's conclusion is significant because the California legislature currently is considering a bill that would legalize gay marriage. California voters approved Proposition 22 in 2000 by a margin of 61-39%.

Conservatives and traditionalists will use the ruling in arguing against the bill's passage, and if a same-sex marriage bill is signed into law, they could use the ruling in a suit to prevent the law from taking effect. The ruling would be binding on lower courts.

"In California, if the people pass an initiative, the legislature cannot trump it. That's in the California Constitution," Glen Lavy, an attorney with the pro-family group Alliance Defense Fund, told Baptist Press. "It is very good that the court said this, because it's getting the attention of some people out there who seem to think the legislature can do whatever it wants."

California's domestic partnership law went into effect this year and provides same-sex couples with nearly all of the state legal benefits of marriage. Pro-family groups filed suit, arguing that the law violates Proposition 22, but so far two courts



have disagreed. The latest ruling is being appealed to the California Supreme Court.

The court's reference to same-sex marriage was a bright spot in an otherwise disappointing ruling.

Mark Leno, the openly homosexual assemblyman pushing the bill, disagreed that the public must have a say. His bill is scheduled to be heard by the judiciary committee April 26, the Chronicle reported. "It's one opinion," he told the newspaper. "It's part of the scenery along the path we have to travel."

Leno has argued that Proposition 22 only prevents California from recognizing out-of-state gay marriages but does not prevent their legalization in-state — an assertion that conservative attorneys have labeled ridiculous. Proposition 22 states: "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

"Valid" refers to what is within the state, and 'recognized' refers to out of state," Lavy told the Chronicle.

The appeals court, in fact, sided with conservatives on that specific issue. It ruled that Proposition 22 ensures that "California will not permit same-sex partners to validly marry within the state."

The Alliance Defense Fund is representing the Proposi-

tion 22 Legal Defense and Education Fund. Another pro-family legal group, Liberty Counsel, is representing Campaign for California Families.

Meanwhile, the California chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has announced its support for the gay marriage bill. It is the first time that a chapter of the NAACP has backed the issue. Polls show that a majority of blacks nationwide oppose same-sex marriage, and many black leaders have taken offense at the comparison between the struggle for civil rights and the fight for homosexual causes.

The issue in California may not be decided by the legislature or the people, however. In March a state judge ruled that same-sex marriage must be legalized. The ruling is on appeal.

Mississippi voters joined voters in several other states last fall in banning same-sex marriage by a wide margin.

For more information about the national debate over same-sex marriage, visit www.baptistrecord.org/samesexmarriage.

Mini-series panned

WHEATON, Ill. (BP) — Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye, whose Left Behind series of books made end-times theology a nationwide topic of discussion, have expressed wariness of NBC's apocalyptic mini-series, Revelations, which premiered April 13. One of the series' main characters, Dr. Richard Massey, a skeptical Harvard professor played by Bill Pullman, looks as though he is headed toward becoming "a firm believer," as Jenkins put it, during the course of the six-hour series — but, said Jenkins, who has viewed the first Revelations episode, "[W]hat he promises to come to believe is a mishmash of myth, silliness, and misrepresentations of Scripture." LaHaye, the creator of Left Behind series and a prophecy scholar, described the show as "unbiblical" and "weird." "This story is based on some writer's imagination about the Book of Revelation," LaHaye said. "However, the writer clearly has not studied the book or maybe even read it." Jenkins noted that the series' other lead character, Sister Josepha, played by Natascha McElhone, a nun who is assigned to study the end times, is involved in a search for a baby Jesus. "Regardless of where people stand on the interpretation of biblical prophecy, no one believes Jesus will return again as a baby," Jenkins said. "Beyond that, Sister Josepha states that her intention is to 'protect' Jesus, as if the Son of God would need human help, and that she wants to 'forestall the confrontation' between Jesus and the antichrist — as if humans can somehow influence the acts of God." If productions such as NBC's miss the mark and are commercial failures, however, the seeming awakening of Hollywood to spiritual themes may become another passing fad, Jenkins said. Christians who watch Revelations may be able to discuss its inaccuracies with friends and family, Jenkins added. "I recommend watching it but with a healthy dose of skepticism," he said. The latest Left Behind installment by Jenkins and LaHaye, The Rising, currently is No. 1 on The New York Times best-seller list.

Looking back

10 years ago

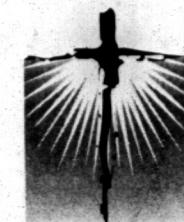
Unanimously adopting a detailed "statement of concern" about the proposed restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention, trustees of the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis conclude: "We do not embrace or support the recommendation in its current form."

20 years ago

Alumni of William Carey College's biblical studies and church vocations department announce an \$80,000 fundraising campaign to expand the department's facilities on the school's Hattiesburg campus.

50 years ago

An article in The Baptist Record states, "It is wrong for a Christian to dance because all Bible-loving, godly, soul-winning Christians throughout the nation — evangelists, pastors, and laymen — are opposed to the modern dance. It is questionable, shady, off-color, and not strictly above board."



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

THE BAPTIST
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HURTING PASTORS

Many of our pastors are hurting. Seldom does a day go by that I do not see, talk to, or hear from at least one pastor who is in pain. Being in ministry has never been easy. It was not easy for Jeremiah, or Elijah, or John the Baptist, or the Apostle Paul, or our Lord Jesus. While there may be an exception or two, it would probably be impossible to find one associational mission director who does not have one or several of their pastors who are living in great pain. If you would, permit me to look at hurting pastors in a broad, three-fold way.

First of all, there are those pastors who are hurting because they have been abused, attacked, slandered, and unfairly castigated as they seek to lead their congregations. There are people who feel that it is their prerogative and maybe even their calling to test, irritate, and verbally and emotionally pick at the pastor in order that they might prove what he is or is not made of, and for whatever reason there are only two pastors they have liked — the one who just left and the one who is to come. The one who is present now is always in their mental and psychological gun sight.

YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

"You have heard it said that you are to love your neighbor, but I tell you love your enemies, do good to them." It would seem that if our expressions of love were to range from those we care about most to those who may even hate us the most, that somewhere on that scale God's people would find ways of loving their pastor — and may I add as an aside but almost more pointedly than what I have already written, that the pastor's family is often hurting the most. If some people feel obligated to try to hurt pastoral leadership, the most cowardly among them would feel the best way to do it is to attack his wife or children. Such bitterness has no bounds and such hurt has no ending.

The second aspect of hurting pastors to consider is those pastors who are hurting their congregations. I am also equally and fully aware of this problem. Sometimes when pastors are hurt they attempt to hurt back. When they are pushed, they react. When attacked, they unleash an attack. At other times the pastor may lead in imperfect ways, and with a lack of wisdom or insufficient information. There are times that the pastor may lead, speak, or even attack and his spirit is anything but right. I would wish that all of the mistakes that our pastors make would be errors of the head and not the heart, but there are times when the heart can be twisted out of shape and lead with distortion that can be hurtful to the church and community.

There are times when our pastors are hurting and inflicting pain on others. Every pas-

tor that I have ever known had one or multiple imperfections. Some of their own deficiencies they are aware of and others are just total blind spots. There have been those few but very rare exceptions in my own personal knowledge where some pastor thought that his calling was to hurt the sheep. When that happens it seems to be a very wide coverage, and it makes people suspicious of even the most caring shepherd.

Please understand that I am fully aware that while our congregations are filled with flawed folks so are our pulpits and we can be hurting pastors in the sense that we are hurting others. Sometimes the hurt can be inflicted by a thoughtless word and sometimes by an unfulfilled responsibility. Sometimes it is intentional and sometimes the hurt is not known for years. Even so the hurt is there, the pain is real, and the difficulties created in the relationship are compounded.

A third area of hurting pastors I ask you to think about is the sad reality of pastors hurting themselves. Of course, this truth can be tied to the two other aspects with which I have dealt, but this one seems to be epidemic. My heart breaks as I hear of and see so many pastors who are hurting themselves. Literally, self-destruction is taking place and in the process they inflict indescribable aches on everyone around them. The self-destruction comes from a huge arsenal of poison. Sometimes it is found in addictions that range from pills to pornography and from gambling to gluttony, but ultimately the results are the same, a sad

short-circuited life. Still others bring on self-inflicted wounds and even death from indiscretions in relationships to improper use of finances. Sometimes when a church has been through a terrible experience someone will ask me a question like, "Why don't they teach them in seminary not to do...?" Someone may ask, "Why doesn't the convention, the seminary, or somebody tell these preachers" and then they finish the sentence with a half a dozen different things that could be constructive. Why doesn't someone teach them to control their temper or why hasn't somebody instructed them not to use a certain kind of language? Why don't they avoid the appearance of evil? Well, my soul and body, everybody from their mama to the seminary to folks in the church may be telling them and it doesn't mean that they will pay attention. There is a quality of spiritual discipline that is essential in the life of the minister who will serve well and survive in ministry. Apart from that discipline, at some point he will explode, implode, or corrode and his ministry will either be finished or tainted forever.

Here is the final thought about hurting pastors. It is not an easy task for it is imperfect men seeking to love and lead less than perfect people in the setting of a warped and often wicked world. With that in mind it is important — no, it is essential — that we give to each other and receive from each other grace, mercy, understanding, and even compassion. God help each of us, all of the family of faith, to help rather than hurt. God has a word for all of us in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 — "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

Mo. Baptists continue fight over breakaway entities

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP) — A Missouri circuit judge on April 5 directed that limited discovery could proceed in one of the two cases brought by the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC) against five breakaway MBC entities, while the initial case is pending in the Missouri Court of Appeals.

Judge Richard G. Callahan of the Cole County Circuit Court granted none of the six motions filed by attorneys representing five breakaway MBC entities, including motions that sought to dismiss the legal action brought by the convention in its effort to reclaim the entities.

Callahan conducted a hearing with attorneys for all parties to discuss the five-inch stack of motions and memoranda that were before the court. The judge said he was inclined to wait for a ruling on the other case scheduled for oral argument on April 20 before the Missouri Court of Appeals, Western District, in Kansas City. One of the issues in that appeal is whether churches can represent the convention in court or whether only messengers can do

so. Callahan expressed reluctance to rule on that issue in the case pending before his court and thus risk being contradicted by the court of appeals.

Callahan was willing, however, to permit limited discovery to proceed in the case as requested by MBC lead attorney Michael Whitehead. He also directed the five entities to file an answer in the case.

In addition, Callahan set a June 1 hearing date on a motion regarding a key statute that both parties agree needs to be interpreted. The five entities claim that R.S. Mo 355.141 means that only the attorney general can bring this lawsuit and that neither MBC messengers nor churches have standing to be plaintiffs.

The hearing was the latest in a legal battle of more than two years between the MBC and five of its entities where trustees voted to become self-perpetuating without MBC approval. The five entities, with assets worth more than \$240 million, are:

- Windermere Baptist Conference Center.
- The Baptist Home retirement facility.

- Missouri Baptist Foundation.
- Missouri Baptist College (now University).
- Word & Way newsjournal.

"The MBC legal team was very pleased with the hearing on April 5 conducted by Judge Callahan," Whitehead said. "Defendants filed six motions, including motions to dismiss, but the judge granted none of them. He allowed MBC lawyers to proceed with some limited depositions. He also set a hearing date of June 1 on a key motion regarding standing of messengers to represent the MBC. It was important that the messenger case be permitted to take these forward steps, even while we seek a ruling from the Court of Appeals in the church case."

Callahan's decision to allow discovery to proceed in the case means more testimony will be taken through under-oath depositions. Whitehead told the court that certain key figures had not yet been deposed, such as former MBC Executive Director Jim Hill, now interim executive director of the breakaway Baptist General Convention of Missouri.

NEVER BEEN CLOSER

Editor:

I feel I must respond to Vaughn Denton's letter, Baptist Tsunami (March 31 issue). Having grown up in First Church, Gautier, I was blessed with an amazing Christian background. Now, my family and I are members of a church that probably would fall under his blanket of criticism.

Andy Stanley is our senior pastor. I have never been closer in my walk with Jesus than now — and my pastor doesn't wear a tie. Yes, one should dress with discretion for church, but many Sundays, I see pink hair, multiple piercings, etc. This is an environment where they are comfortable just as the prostitute with Jesus. Jesus must be saddened that pastors are preaching only condemnation. People must know first that Jesus wants relationships with us built from love, not fear. It is from love and gratitude for the grace shown to me that I desire to follow God's laws, not out of fear of what will happen if I don't.

The churches he criticizes are reaching those his church will not. His statement, "Telling sinners they are okay, just believe... is silly nonsense" is appalling! That is exactly how Jesus preached. He never said to anyone, "Fix your life, then come see me." He simply said, "Follow me."

Denton should consider the viewpoint of someone who thrived in a Mississippi Southern Baptist church and continues to thrive in a relevant environment. I invite you to visit www.northpoint.org.

Jennifer LaValle
Cumming, Georgia

ATTACK THOUGHTLESS

Editor:

Vaughn Denton's rather thoughtless attack on Rick Warren's ministry (letter to the editor, March 31 issue) generates a few pertinent observations.

First, we are informed by Denton's, shall I say, careless sentence structure, that not one Baptist in the universe cares about the Bible. Secondly, we are informed that any preacher who dares to enter Rick Warren's "rock concerts" is proof positive that these men were never advocates of inerrancy to begin with.

Thirdly, it's entirely possible Rick Warren can deliver more and better spiritual guidance in 15 minutes than Denton can produce in one hour. Fourth, it is entirely possible that authentic worship can be achieved while donning a T-shirt and jeans. Fifth, we are told Warren's preacher visitors never — yes, never — mention Hell.

How does Mr. Denton know this? To brazenly call Warren's ministry "silly nonsense" is, to put it bluntly, thoughtlessly written, silly nonsense.

Charles Moulder
Hattiesburg

WHERE'S LOVE?

Editor:

I am writing to respond to Vaughn Denton's letter, Baptist Tsunami (March 31 issue). I would like to address the fact of a letter to the editor being written in such void of any love. Denton's "so-called preachers," if in fact are thought to be in the wrong, are then deserving of some loving correction. 1 Corinthians 13 says that you can speak all the truth you want, but if it is devoid of love, it does no one any good.

It would seem that some loving instruction and correction (Ephesians 4) would be much needed here in the hypothetical circumstance set up by Denton, rather than condemnation and cutting remarks. To put together a fictional group of California destined pastors who return home and preach in T-shirts and blue jeans, and then attack them, just doesn't make sense. It's like punching the air.

May we be cautious about addressing the clothing some pastors may wear when delivering God's Word. Let us not be so quick to judge Pastor Rick Warren either, especially in the light of Christ's words in Matthew 7:1-5. Attacking others who share Christ in a way different than our very own is exactly why people don't come to know Christ.

Only Christ had it perfect, but we should at least try for it. It's all about love. The greatest commandment is to love God; the second, similar to the first, is to love people (Mark 12:30-31).

Hampton Sims, min. of
students and worship
Four Mile Creek Church
Moss Point

HEAT, NOT LIGHT

Editor:

I would like to present another viewpoint on death and dying, than that expressed on page three of the April 7 issue. The secular press and some Christian writers have shed a lot more heat than light on the issue(s). The public was incited by these pressures, and their shenanigans ensured that all dignity was taken from Terri Schiavo even in her death.

According to the medical evidence, Schiavo died 15 years ago. Diagnostic studies revealed that her brain cortex was replaced with scar tissue and fluid. There was no electroencephalographic evidence that she had normal brain activity. She was kept alive by artificial means. With full information regarding life and death, the majority of Americans would choose not to have this done to them. That is why most of us have prepared living wills.

Whoever invaded her privacy with cameras and exposed her to being viewed worldwide without her consent committed

a grave travesty against human dignity and Schiavo personally. There is absolutely no justification for ever doing this. Where is the outrage over this?

For the record, I want to say that Judge George Greer is a very just and fair public servant who made his decision(s) on the Schiavo case with full knowledge of all the facts and evidence on both sides of the issue. I consider him to be a very committed Christian and am embarrassed that his own pastor and church have contributed to the difficulties of this situation.

Jasper L. McPhail
Clinton

PLAN TO ATTEND

Editor:

I came home from the State Evangelism Conference in Hattiesburg filled, inspired, blessed, and challenged. The preaching and singing were awesome, some of the best I have heard. Temple Church did an outstanding job in making people welcome. The facilities were outstanding. What more could you ask? I wish I could end here, but I can't.

I also came home disappointed and embarrassed because of the low attendance. Take away the women, the workers, and a few others who were there, and I doubt there were 125 pastors there out of 2,000 churches in Mississippi.

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Tuesday was really low.

I have noticed this decline for the past few years. I think I could safely say that 75% or more in attendance were 50-plus years of age. It really concerns me that so many of our younger pastors do not attend conferences like this. I also see this happening in the local pastors' conferences. I believe that a pastor owes it to his church to attend these events. Small wonder some pastors and churches dry up spiritually.

I am 70 years old and I still need these to challenge me. I have only missed a few of these in the last 25 years. Let me challenge you younger pastors as well as older ones to make your plans now to attend the State Evangelism Conference in Columbus in 2006. Try it; you might like it.

Albert McMullen
Meridian



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of co-operating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

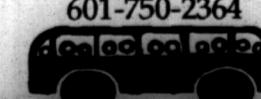
No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.



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JUST FOR THE RECORD

REVIVALS & HOMECOMINGS

Ramah, McCall Creek: Homecoming, Apr. 17, 11 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds; Ted Bowlin, preaching; Tim Ratcliff, music.

Macedonia, Lee County: Revival, Apr. 17-20, 6:30 p.m.; Scott Rodgers, preaching; Tommy Wiggins, music; John Shackleford, pastor.

New Life Fellowship, Oakland: Revival, Apr. 17-22; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 4 p.m.; Mon.-Fri., 7 p.m. Speakers: Jerry W. Smith, Jim Pinkerton, James Tidwell, Ken Boyette, and Danny Bryant.

Ephesus Church, Forest: Revival, Apr. 17-22. Sun., 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m.; Mon.-Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Gene Douglas, evangelist; Chad Douglas, music; Jim Everett, pastor.

Union, Roxie: Homecoming, Apr. 24; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; Roy McKay, guest speaker; Carl Evans, pastor.

Calvary, Oxford: Homecoming, Apr. 24; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m., followed by special music and dinner on the grounds; George Crowden, preaching; special guests, Ina Crowden, J. E. Sims and Cherry Sims.

New Hope, Foxworth: Revival, Apr. 24-27; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. with covered dish lunch; Mon.-Wed., choir rehearsal, 6:15 p.m. and services, 7 p.m. Gene Douglas, evangelist; Bill Herman, music.

North Carrollton, North Carrollton: Revival, Apr. 24-27; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; dinner on the grounds following Sunday morning worship; Mon.-Wed., noon lunch and 7 p.m. Jeff Myers, pastor.

Salem Church, Kemper County: Homecoming, May 1, music featuring Crystal River, 10:30 a.m.; worship, 11:00 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds. Jerry Jones, pastor.

Calvary, Bogue Chitto: Homecoming, May 1; Sunday School 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m.; lunch and fellowship following. Glenn Curtis, speaker; Trent Bilbo, pastor.

Hopewell Church, Crystal Springs: Revival, May 1-5, 7:00 p.m. each evening. Services conducted by the Steele family.

1. **Highland Church, Crystal Springs,** will celebrate its 50th anniversary on Apr. 24 from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. with testimonies and singing; no Sunday School. Vann Windom, McComb, guest speaker. David Patterson, pastor. For more information, contact Ann Rials at (601) 892-4033.
2. **Society Hill Church, Oakvale,** will host a concert featuring Kristian Booth on Apr. 17 at 11:00 a.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information contact Virginia Broom at (601) 792-2720 or (601) 792-8296.
3. **Bethel Church, Holcomb,** will be honoring veterans on May 29. Mail information of veterans buried in Bethel Church Cemetery to: Lynda Lee, 307 Delta Wing Road, Holcomb, MS 38940, or call W.L. Harris Jr. at (662) 226-4968, Buddy Lindley at (662) 647-8953, J.R. Lee at (662) 226-7590, or Harold Livingston at (662) 647-2437.
4. **Rolling Creek Church** is having a Library Open House April 24, 2-4 p.m. celebrating the dedication to the Lord of the new church library. The church library is being established in honor of Michael Hennington, son of Bob and Carolyn Hennington. Pastor is Ronnie Cooper.
5. **West Laurel Church, Laurel,** recently ordained John Hughes and Danny Byrd as deacons. Shown, from left, are Jeff Taylor, pastor; Hughes; Byrd; and Wendel Turner.
6. **West Laurel Church, Laurel,** honored their organist, Ouida Graves, for 25 years of service. Mayor Susan Vincent presented Graves with a resolution declaring it Ouida Graves Day in Laurel. Shown are Vincent and Graves.
7. **Thompson Smithdale,** recently ordained Ricky Johnson, Greg Maxwell, and Larry Chambers as deacons. Shown, from left, are Brent Parker, pastor; Johnson; Maxwell, and Chambers.
8. The GAs of **Pheba Church, Pheba,** recently participated for a Walk-For-Relief in which they raised \$1,100 which was sent to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board for aid to tsunami victims. Shown, front, from left, are Abby Gordon and Maggie Gordon; center, Brynn Latham, Autumn Gray, Jana White, and Lauren Walker; and back, Evin Foster, Josie McKee, Jessie McKee, and Katie Gordon. Leaders are Joy Walker and Becky McNeel.



5. Deacon Ordination, West Laurel Church, Laurel



6. Vincent and Graves, West Laurel Church, Laurel



6. Vincent and Graves, West Laurel Church, Laurel



6. Vincent and Graves, West Laurel Church, Laurel



6. Vincent and Graves, West Laurel Church, Laurel

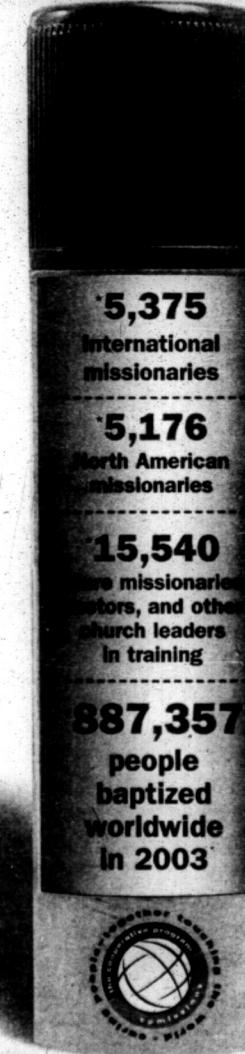


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* Taken from the 2004 SBC Book of Reports

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